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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to provide descriptive information about the quantity of classroom time used for teaching reading and the interruptive events that occur during the scheduled reading time. Data were gathered from 148 public and private school teachers representing all grade levels and a wide range of teaching experience. The subjects each kept a record for a five-day period of the amount of time scheduled for reading, the actual time spent teaching reading, the content of the reading lessons (optional), and the observed reasons for not fully using the scheduled reading time. Teachers reported that they actually used 93.3% of the scheduled reading time for teaching reading, and that 6.7% of the scheduled time was lost due to interruptive events. The most frequently reported interruptive events were administrative and procedural routines, schedule timing (such as students returning late from another activity or early dismissal), and communications (such as helping a volunteer get started, helping another teacher, parent conferences, or taking a phone call). (A copy of the record form is appended.) (FL)

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A STUDY OF THE QUANTITY OF TIME FOR TEACHING READING

The Research and Study Committee

A Paper Presented at the Research and Study Symposium
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Research and Study Committee would like to thank the teachers who participated in this study and to encourage teachers to take part in future research projects.

1982-83 Research and Study Committee

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A STUDY OF THE QUANTITY OF TIME FOR TEACHING READING

INTRODUCTION

Teachers schedule reading periods in order to get needed instruction accomplished. The use of this scheduled time is a significant dimension of effective reading instruction since it is actual time used rather than total time scheduled which is important for increasing student achievement. The use of the scheduled time for reading instruction is influenced by many factors, one of which is the classroom setting in which it occurs. The unexpected happenings, or interruptive events, which occur in the classroom during the scheduled reading time influence a teacher's time for direct instruction and ultimately, student achievement.

PURPOSE

Classroom interruptions periodically occur during a scheduled reading period. These interruptive events reduce the time for direct instruction and the students' engaged-time on task. How much of a teacher's scheduled reading time is actually used for teaching reading? What are the interruptive events which require a teacher's attention during the scheduled reading period and how much of the reading time is used by these interruptive events?

The purpose of this Florida Reading Association study was: 1) to determine the quantity of time Florida classroom teachers perceive that they are actually teaching reading, and 2) to provide descriptive information about the interruptive events which occur during the scheduled reading time. Classroom teachers can use the descriptive information from the study to assess and manipulate their own scheduled reading time to reduce interruptive events and, thus, increase the time for actual reading instruction.

PROCEDURES

The Teacher Record Form. A pilot study (n = 5) was conducted in 1982; the form used to collect data for the study, the Teacher Record Form, was modified as a result of actual use. A copy of the final Teacher Record Form is in the Appendix, pp. 11-12. The Teacher Record Form was distributed to Florida teachers by the FRA District Directors. Participating teachers were asked to keep a record for a five day period of the amount of time scheduled for reading, actual teaching time, content of the reading lessons (optional), and the observed reason(s) for not fully using the scheduled reading time. Forms were completed during February and March of 1983 and returned to the FRA Research and Study Committee.

Respondents. The total number of Florida teachers completing the Teacher Record Form was 156; eight of the forms were incomplete; useable Teacher Record Forms were N = 148. Respondents were from elementary, middle, junior high, and senior high schools. Teaching experience ranged from 1/2 year to 40 years. Respondents were from public and private schools.

Limitations. There were 148 useable Teacher Record Forms. The size of the sample limits the generalizations which can be made from the data. Also, the self-reporting technique used for the study had accuracy limitations; teachers might not have listed all of the interruptive events which occurred during the scheduled reading period.

Methods. Using the time log from the Teacher Record Form, the amount of reading time scheduled and actually used for teaching reading was calculated as a mean for weekly and daily reading periods. The reasons listed on the Teacher Record Form for not fully using the scheduled reading time were classified as interruptive events and coded into nine descriptive categories. A modification of the time use category model of Sanford and Evertson (1983) was used as the basis for the classification scheme. The descriptive categories provided a qualitative distinction among the classroom interruptive events. The nine descriptive categories of interruptive events were:

1. Administrative and procedural routines
2. Transitions
3. School specials
4. Classroom discipline
5. Individual assistance
6. Teacher record keeping
7. Communications
8. Schedule timing
9. Other

A definition and illustrative examples for each category follow:

1. Administrative and Procedural Routines
   An interruptive event which was frequent and usual in most classrooms; as--announcements, opening and closing routines, getting supplies, collecting money, sharpening pencils, bathroom break, attendance.

2. Transitions
   An interruptive event which focused on organization from one activity to another; as--distribution of graded papers, discussion of grades, discussion of schedules or assignments, passing in papers.

3. School Specials
   An interruptive event which was infrequent but usual in most schools; as--pictures taken, book fair, assemblies (for puppet show, dentist's visit, fire prevention program, school play, guest speakers, spelling bee, counselor program).

4. Classroom Discipline
   An interruptive event which focused on student behavior; as--disciplining a student, getting student from bathroom, settling disruptive student.

5. Individual Assistance
   An interruptive event which required immediate teacher attention; as--sick child, helping child call home, new student arriving, child with pink eye, tardy child, parent picking up child, child bringing something special to show, individual directions given after directions to group completed, make-up test.

6. Teacher Record Keeping
   An interruptive event which kept the teacher occupied with recording information; as--filling in office report, completing records.

7. Communications
   An interruptive event which was an interaction and exchange of information; as--helping a volunteer get started, helping another teacher, parent conference, getting a phone call, talking with primary specialist-migrant teacher-psychologist-principal-parent.

8. Schedule Timing
   An interruptive event which occurred as a time factor; as--late coming from media-art-music-physical education class, early dismissal, social studies-spelling-math-calendar work ran over, finished all the reading early and moved to next subject, intern teacher-substitute teacher did not use all of the time.

9. Other
   An interruptive event that occurred infrequently and was highly attention getting; as--moved furniture to lay carpet, hot air balloon landed on the playground, fire or tornado drill, rummage sale, termites swarmed in the reading corner.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Florida teachers perceived that of the total time scheduled for reading instruction 93.3 percent was actually used for teaching reading and 6.7 percent was used by interruptive events. The 148 respondents scheduled reading for 963 hours 52 minutes for a five day period and actually taught reading 899 hours 26 minutes. The mean amount of time scheduled daily for reading instruction was 78.15 minutes and 72.93 minutes were actually used for daily reading instruction. Table 1 gives a summary of the quantity of time for teaching reading.

Table 1.--Quantity of Time for Teaching Reading

Amount of Time for Teaching Reading	Minutes Mean
Scheduled weekly	390.76
Actually used weekly	364.64
Scheduled daily	78.15
Actually used daily	72.93

N = 148

For a five day period 21.6 percent (N = 32) of the teachers reported no loss of scheduled reading time due to interruptive events; 9.4 percent (N = 10) reported that they extended the reading period longer than scheduled; and 71.6 percent (N = 106) reported

a loss of teaching time due to interruptive events. The 106 teachers who reported reasons for not fully using the scheduled reading time listed 295 interruptive events. The interruptive events used 6.7 percent of the scheduled reading time. Interruptive events caused a mean loss of scheduled teaching time for each teacher of 5.22 minutes daily and 26.1 minutes for a five day period.

The interruptive events were classified into nine descriptive categories in order to provide distinctive information about the events. Percent of occurrence of each category for a five day period was calculated. Table 2 displays the results.

Table 2.--Record of Interruptive Events

Interruptive Event Category	Percent of Occurrence For Five Day Period
Administrative and procedural routines	23.0
Transitions	6.4
School specials	12.2
Classroom discipline	8.8
Individual assistance	12.9
Teacher record keeping	1.7
Communications	13.6
Schedule timing	17.3
Other	4.1
N = 295	

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

The mean amount of time actually used daily for reading instruction was 72.93 minutes. This actual time used for daily reading instruction ranged from a period of 30 to 167 minutes. Time used for actual instruction has been shown to be positively related to achievement (Denham & Lieberman, 1980; Frederick & Walberg, 1980). Consequently, even though there might be more interruptive events during the longer reading period, the students might be achieving more than those in the shorter period with no interruptive events.

Interruptive events caused a mean loss of scheduled teaching time for each teacher of 5.22 minutes daily and 26.1 minutes for a five day period. In order to increase actual classroom teaching time, the number of interruptive events would need to be reduced. Few interruptive events occurred due to teacher record keeping, transitions, or classroom discipline. School specials, individual assistance, and other (highly attention getting) interruptive events are not readily controlled by the teacher and do not appear to offer many possibilities for reducing their occurrence in order to increase actual teaching time.

The categories of interruptive events which appear to have good possibilities for reducing their occurrence and, thus, increasing actual teaching time is administrative and procedural routines, schedule timing, and communications. These three categories accounted

for 53.9 percent of the interruptive events. These events are controlled directly by the teacher and/or a general school policy. Administrative and procedural routines were frequent interruptive events. A teacher's assessment of these routines might reveal that they could be reduced by establishing procedures which would enable students to act on their own without direct teacher attention. Communications with others to exchange information are essential events; however, a general school policy stressing that more regard be given to conducting communications during a planning time could help reduce the number of these events occurring during the scheduled reading time. Occasional interruptive events due to schedule timing are, realistically, difficult for a classroom teacher or a school policy to control. Students coming late to reading class because of an extended time use by a special teacher does occur and may very well be due to essential needs of the special class. Occasionally extending the teaching time for a subject into the scheduled reading time may be important for understanding that particular lesson. However, the frequency with which these events occurred indicated that they were more than occasional. Increased awareness of how much teaching time is lost due to schedule timing might improve punctuality and reduce the number of these interruptive events.

SUMMARY

This study provides descriptive information about the quantity of classroom time for teaching reading and the interruptive events which occur during the scheduled reading time. Teachers reported that they actually used 93.3 percent of the scheduled reading time for teaching reading and that 6.7 percent of the scheduled time was lost due to interruptive events. Frequently reported interruptive events were administrative and procedural routines, schedule timing, and communications. The amount of actual time used for teaching reading is an important factor for increasing student achievement. Classroom teachers can use the results of this study to assess and manipulate their own scheduled reading time to reduce interruptive events and, thus, increase the time for actual reading instruction.

REFERENCES

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Frederick, C. W., & Walberg, H. J. Learning as a function of time. Journal of Educational Research, 1980, 73, 183-194.

Sanford, J. P., & Evertson, C. Time use and activities in junior high classes. Journal of Educational Research, 1983, 76, 140-147.

APPENDIX

Request For Participation

The Research and Study Committee is collecting data pertaining to teachers' perceptions of amount of time they are teaching reading. Therefore, we are addressing a letter to the members of the Florida Reading Association asking for their participation in this convenience study.

Dear Teacher:

You are being asked to participate in a statewide study to determine the *quantity* of time classroom teachers are *actually* teaching reading. If you are willing, please keep track of the amount of time you teach reading for a five day period and fill in the form.

Below is an example of how you should fill in your form during one week of your reading instruction. If you teach reading more than one period a day, please pick one. Keep in mind that you are participating in a statewide study to determine the quantity of time classroom teachers are actually teaching reading. Please feel free to add information you think would be useful and return your data collecting form.

TEACHER RECORD FORM

GRADE_____ TEACHING EXPERIENCE_____ YEARS
NUMBER

SCHOOL: _____ Elem._____ Middle_____ J.H._____ S.H._____

DATE	SCHEDULED READING TIME	ACTUAL TEACHING TIME (any instructional activities directed to students, e.g., teacher explanation, games, exercises, directed reading activities)	CONTENT OF RDG. LESSON(S) (OPTIONAL)	OBSERVED REASON(S) FOR INABILITY TO USE FULLY ALLOTED TIME
(Day 1) 9-7-82	60 min.	55 min.	3+ readiness book (Macmillan) new voc. vowel lesson	New student arrival – talked with mother for several min.
(Day 2) 9-8-82	80 min.	70 min.	3+ vocab. game 3+ readiness book rhyming words game vowel lesson	children restless because of heat, playground break and snack early
(Day 3) 9-9-82	80 min.	95 min.	vowel lesson vocab. game (3+ voc. color words) 3+ readiness book	
(Day 4) 9-10-82	70 min.	85 min.	Vocab. drill w/ overhead; vocab. drill w/ theatre games 3+ readiness book	
(Day 5) 9-13-82	80 min.	75 min.	3+ readiness bk. – new vocab words ryhming game vowel lesson	fire drill bathroom break

Please know your cooperation and professionalism are greatly appreciated by this Committee and that you can look forward to information about this project in a future issue of the *Florida Reading Quarterly*.

Sincerely,

Richard

Richard A. Thompson
Chairman, Research and Study Committee
University of Central Florida, P.O. Box 25000, Orlando, Florida 32816

TEACHER RECORD FORM

GRADE_____ TEACHING EXPERIENCE_____ YEARS
NUMBER

SCHOOL:_____ Elem._____ Middle_____ J.H._____ S.H._____

DATE	SCHEDULED READING TIME	ACTUAL TEACHING TIME (any instructional activities directed to students, e.g., teacher explanation, games, exercises, directed reading activities)	CONTENT OF RDG. LESSON(S) (OPTIONAL)	OBSERVED REASON(S) FOR INABILITY TO USE FULLY ALLOTED TIME
(Day 1)				
(Day 2)				
(Day 3)				
(Day 4)				
(Day 5)				